

GENERAL OFFICE MEMORANDUM 22-026

TO: ALL DISTRICT ATTORNEY PERSONNEL

FROM: GEORGE GASCÓN   
District Attorney

SUBJECT: CREATION OF YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEE (YJC)

DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2022

The Youth Justice Committee (“the YJC” or “the committee”) has been created to help provide resources and support to ensure that our juvenile legal system continues to evolve in a way that is in the community’s interest and serves a rehabilitative and restorative purpose. To help accomplish this, the YJC will be tasked with three primary purposes:

- (1) Identification of cases of concern in our local juvenile system to ensure the best possible individualized review and disposition;
- (2) Identifying legislative proposals to ensure our justice system continues to evolve in a manner that is effective, ethical, and equitable;
- (3) Discussion and coordination with our justice partners regarding the development of the County’s Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) alternative.

**I. IDENTIFICATION OF CASES OF CONCERN**

At the outset of the formation of the YJC, its members shall coordinate with the Head Deputy and the Assistant Head Deputy of the Juvenile Division to identify cases of concern where additional review and oversight may be warranted. The following criteria should be used as guidance for cases to be reviewed by the YJC:

- (1) Murder cases that would traditionally qualify for special circumstance allegations under Penal Code § 190.2;
- (2) Aggravated violent sexual assaults as defined in Penal Code § 667.61;
- (3) Any other case involving exceptionally serious or anomalous conduct where additional supervision and resources are necessary.

**A. Compilation and Review of Pertinent Information**

Once the YJC has accepted a case for review, the goal shall be to conduct an individualized review and make recommendations on dispositions. This shall be done by facilitating a detailed

compilation and review of all relevant documentation and information. This will necessarily involve the cooperation of the assigned DDA, as well as the assigned probation officer and other stakeholders, including the defense bar. Because of the potentially complex nature of these cases, the committee can help ensure that all appropriate and relevant information is obtained and reviewed.

It is goal of the YJC that the reviewing members use their collective experience to help obtain the relevant information in an expeditious manner and, eventually, provide standardized guidance to all DDAs in the Juvenile Division on how they can obtain similar information in their cases. Members of the committee may also seek assistance from other DDAs in the office who, due to either experience in the Office, past professional endeavors, or personal experience have become appropriate subject matter experts.

### **B. Centralization of Data on Treatment Programs**

The YJC will compile and maintain a centralized database containing a brief summary of available localized community-based treatment programs including geographical region of services and program format.

## **II. LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

One of the other primary functions of the YJC shall also be to pinpoint opportunities for growth in our juvenile system. Through reviewing cases of concern and treatment programs, as well as maintaining open communication with our DDAs and other justice partners, the YJC will be able to recommend legislative proposals at the local and state level to help ensure that our youth justice system continues to progress.

## **III. DEVELOPMENT OF DJJ ALTERNATIVE**

The third purpose of the YJC shall be coordination with justice partners regarding the development of the County's DJJ alternative. The YJC creates a forum for interested DDAs to inform planning and discussion related to the development and strengthening of these new programs.

## **IV. MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The members of the committee shall be selected by the District Attorney or their designee. Any interested members should reach out to the Assistant Head Deputy of the Juvenile Division.

## **V. CHAIN OF COMMAND**

The YJC shall operate under the purview of the office's Juvenile Division and its chain of command. The decision whether to review a case of concern shall be decided by the Director of the Bureau of Specialized Prosecutions.

## **VI. TRANSFERS**

The policy of the office regarding the transfers of youths to a court of criminal jurisdiction (“adult court”) remains unchanged (see Special Directive 20-09). However, if the committee members in the course of their work are unable to find an appropriate and adequate disposition within the juvenile justice system, the committee may seek an alternative disposition through a referral to the Juvenile Alternative Charge Evaluation Committee.

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